Beggars in trains

†5484. SHRI VIJAY SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of beggars in trains is increasing consistently;

(b) if so, whether the Ministry of Railways is aware of inconvenience caused to passengers, specially difficulties being faced by passengers of reserved compartments, in safeguarding their luggage; and

(c) if so, the details of steps Government propose to take to stop beggary in trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, bonafide passengers are inconvenienced due to entry of unauthorised persons in reserved compartments.

(c) In addition to regular checks, special drives are conducted from time to time by the ticket checking staff and police to apprehend beggars both in trains and on platforms and action taken against them as per the relevant provisions of law.

Quality of food on trains

5485. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons behind the poor quality of food on the running trains;

(b) why vendors are allowed to roam about freely on the running trains who often commit a lot of thefts; and

(c) whether Railway Minister would take cognizance of this and improve the food quality especially on long distance trains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Sometimes complaints do arise regarding quality of food, for which remedial action is taken.

(b) Authorised vendors only are permitted to vend essential items in

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

running trains. Unauthorised hawking and vending is a punishable offence under the Railways Act, 1989. Regular checks with the assistance of Government Railway Police and Railway Protection Force are conducted to stop activities of unauthorised vendors and hawkers.

(c) Indian Railways consistently take steps to ensure good quality of food supplied by them on trains as well as at railway stations, by use of quality raw material & branded products, hygiene & cleanliness, training of staff, frequent surprise checks and inspections etc. Moreover, with a view to upgrade and professionalise catering services on trains as well as at railway stations, Ministry of Railways have set up Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).

Priorities for Railway Projects

5486. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Finance Ministry and Planning Commission have asked the Railways to review priority on implementation of ongoing projects;

(b) if so, whether the railways have prioritise the projects in the light of suggestions made;

(c) if so, the details of such projects, and when the action on their implementation was initiated, the original estimated cost and the schedule for their completion finalized, if any; and

(d) what is the present cost of these projects and whether these have been cleared by the Finance Ministry and Planning Commission?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) Planning Commission in their Integrated Transport Policy document of October, 2001 have recommended that in view of the large shelf of Railway projects, there is a need to prioritise these projects.

(b) Projects under New Lines and Gauge Conversion plan-heads were prioritised by the Railways with the approval of the Government in November, 1998.